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POEMS OF  
MEMORY  
AND  
HOPE



BY  
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

NEW YORK

JOHN C. SMITH & COMPANY



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POEMS  
OF  
MEMORY AND HOPE.

BY  
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

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H. W. H. Co.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY HENNESSY AND THWAITES.



Hennessy.

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# CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
1. MEMORY AND HOPE.....	5
2. CHANGE UPON CHANGE.....	10
3. A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.....	11
4. LITTLE MATTIE.....	12
5. ISOBEL'S CHILD.....	16
6. THE PET NAME.....	29
7. THE MOURNING MOTHER OF THE DEAD BLIND.....	43
8. RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.....	46
"OH, THE LITTLE BIRDS SANG EAST, AND THE LITTLE BIRDS SANG WEST."	
9. A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.....	75
10. ONLY A CURL.....	81
11. THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST... ..	85
12. THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.....	91
13. THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.....	97
14. THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.....	105
15. THE DESERTED GARDEN .....	113
16. HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.....	118
17. TO BETTINE, THE CHILD FRIEND OF GOETHE.....	123
18. A SONG AGAINST SINGING.....	126
19. SLEEPING AND WATCHING.....	128
20. THE LOST BOWER.....	130
21. A TALE OF VILLAFRANCA.....	149
22. A PORTRAIT.....	153
23. VOID IN LAW.....	157
24. MY CHILD.....	161

# ILLUSTRATIONS.

---

1. HOPE.....	Hennessy.....	Title.
2. ISOBEL'S CHILD.....	Thwaites .....	17
3. RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY....	“ .....	53
4. THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST..	“ .....	85
5. “ “ “	Hennessy....	89
6. THE FOURFOLD ASPECT .....	Clayton.....	93
7. THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.....	Hennessy.....	109
8. BETTINE... ..	“ .....	123
9. THE LOST BOWER.....	Thwaites .....	135
10. “ “ “ .....	Hennessy.....	143
11. A PORTRAIT.....	Thwaites.....	153
12. “ .....	Hennessy.....	155

# POEMS

OF

## MEMORY AND HOPE.

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### MEMORY AND HOPE.

#### BACK-LOOKING Memory

And prophet Hope both sprang from out the ground,  
One, where the flashing of Cherubic sword  
Fell sad, in Eden's ward;  
And one, from Eden earth, within the sound  
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,  
What time the promise after curse was said—  
"Thy seed shall bruise his head."

Poor Memory's brain is wild,  
As moonstruck by that flaming atmosphere  
When she was born. Her deep eyes shine and shone  
With light that conquereth sun  
And stars to wanner paleness year by year;  
With odorous gums, she mixeth things defiled;  
She trampleth down earth's grasses green and sweet,  
With her far-wandering feet.

She plucketh many flowers,  
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness killing ;  
She teacheth every melancholy sound  
    To winds and waters round ;  
She droppeth tears with seed, where man is tilling  
The rugged soil in his exhausted hours ;  
She smileth—ah me ! in her smile doth go  
    A mood of deeper woe !

Hope tripped on out of sight  
Crowned with Eden wreath she saw not wither,  
And went a-nodding through the wilderness,  
    With brow that shone no less  
Than a sea-gull's wing, brought nearer by rough weather ;  
Searching the treeless rock for fruits of light ;  
Her fair quick feet being armed from stones and cold,  
    By slippers of pure gold.

Memory did Hope much wrong,  
And, while she dreamed, her slippers stole away ;  
But still she wended on with mirth unheeding,  
    Although her feet were bleeding ;  
Till Memory tracked her on a certain day,  
And with most evil eyes did search her long  
And cruelly, whereat she sank to ground  
    In a stark deadly swoond.



And so my hope were slain,  
Had it not been that THOU wert standing near,  
Oh Thou, who saidest "live" to creatures lying  
In their own blood and dying!  
For Thou her forehead to thine heart didst rear  
And make its silent pulses sing again,—  
Pouring a new light o'er her darkened eyne,  
With tender tears from Thine!

Therefore my hope arose  
From out her swoond and gazed upon Thy face,  
And, meeting there that soft subduing look  
Which Peter's spirit shook,  
Sank downward in a rapture to embrace  
Thy piercèd hands and feet with kisses close,  
And prayed Thee to assist her evermore  
To "reach the things before."

Then gavest Thou the smile  
Whence angel-wings thrill quick like summer lightning,  
Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where she never  
From Love and Faith may sever;  
Whereat the Eden crown she saw not whitening  
A time ago, though whitening all the while,  
Reddened with life, to hear the Voice which talked  
To Adam as he walked.



## CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

FIVE months ago, the stream did flow,  
 The lilies bloomed within the sedge ;  
 And we were lingering to and fro,—  
 Where none will track thee in this snow,  
 Along the stream, beside the hedge  
 Ah, sweet, be free to love and go !  
 For if I do not hear thy foot,  
 The frozen river is as mute,  
 The flowers have dried down to the root ;  
 And why, since these be changed since May,  
 Shouldst *thou* change less than *they* ?

And slow, slow, as the winter snow,  
 The tears have dritted to mine eyes ;  
 And my poor cheeks, five months ago,  
 Set blushing at thy praises so,  
 Put paleness on for a disguise.  
 Ah, sweet, be free to praise and go !  
 For if my face is turned to pale,  
 It was thine oath that first did fail,—  
 It was thy love proved false and frail !  
 And why, since these be changed enow,  
 Should *I* change less than *thou* ?



## A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.

THEY say that God lives very high.

But if you look above the pines  
You cannot see our God ; and why ?

And if you dig down in the mines  
You never see Him in the gold ;  
Though, from Him, all that's glory shines.

God is so good, He wears a fold  
Of heaven and earth across his face—  
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

But still I feel that His embrace  
Slides down by thrills, through all things made,  
Through sight and sound of every place.

As if my tender mother laid  
On my shut lids, her kisses' pressure,  
Half-waking me at night, and said  
“ Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser ? ”



## LITTLE MATTIE.

DEAD ! Thirteen a month ago !  
Short and narrow her life's walk.  
Lover's love she could not know  
Even by a dream or talk :  
Too young to be glad of youth ;  
Missing honour, labour, rest,  
And the warmth of a babe's mouth  
At the blossom of her breast.  
Must you pity her for this,  
And for all the loss it is—  
You, her mother with wet face,  
Having had all in your case ?

Just so young but yesternight,  
Now she is as old as death.  
Meek, obedient in your sight,  
Gentle to a beck or breath  
Only on last Monday ! yours,  
Answering you like silver bells

Lightly touched ! an hour matures :

    You can teach her nothing else.

She has seen the mystery hid

Under Egypt's pyramid.

By those eyelids pale and close

Now she knows what Rhamses knows.

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth

    Down her patient locks of silk,

Cold and passive as in truth

    You your fingers in spilt milk

Drew along a marble floor ;

    But her lips you cannot wring

Into saying a word more,

    “ Yes ” or “ no,” or such a thing.

Though you call and beg and wreak

Half your soul out in a shriek,

She will lie there in default

And most innocent revolt.

Ay, and if she spoke, may be

    She would answer like the Sox,

“ What is now 'twixt thee and me ? ”

    Dreadful answer ! better none.

Yours on Monday, God's to-day !

    Yours, your child, your blood, your heart,

Called . . . you called her, did you say,  
    "Little Mattie" for your part?  
Now already it sounds strange,  
And you wonder, in this change,  
What He calls His angel-creature,  
Higher up than you can reach her.

'Twas a green and easy world  
    As she took it ! room to play,  
(Though one's hair might get uncured  
    At the far end of the day.)  
What she suffered she shook off  
    In the sunshine ; what she sinned  
She could pray on high enough  
    To keep safe above the wind.  
If reproved by God or you,  
'Twas to better her she knew ;  
And, if crossed, she gathered still  
'Twas to cross out something ill.

You, you had the right, you thought,  
    To survey her with sweet scorn,  
Poor gay child, who had not caught  
    Yet the octave-stretch forlorn  
Of your larger wisdom ! Nay,  
    Now your places are changed so,

In that same superior way  
She regards you dull and low  
As you did herself exempt  
From life's sorrows. Grand contempt  
Of the spirits risen awhile,  
Who look back with such a smile!

There's the sting of't. That, I think,  
Hurts the most, a thousandfold!  
To feel sudden, at a wink,  
Some dear child we used to scold,  
Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,  
Teach and tumble as our own  
All its curls about our knees,  
Rise up suddenly full-grown.  
Who could wonder such a sight  
Made a woman mad outright?  
— Show me Michael with the sword  
Rather than such angels, Lord!





## ISOBEL'S CHILD.

— so find we profit,  
By losing of our prayers.

SHAKESPEARE.

To rest the weary nurse has gone,  
An eight-day watch had watchèd she,  
Still rocking beneath sun and moon  
The baby on her knee,  
Till Isobel its mother said  
“The fever waneth—wend to bed,  
For now the watch comes round to me.”

Then wearily the nurse did throw  
Her pallet in the darkest place  
Of that sick room, and slept and dreamed.  
For as the gusty wind did blow  
The night-lamp's glare across her face,  
She saw, or seemed to see, but dreamed,  
That the poplars tall on the opposite hill,  
The seven tall poplars on the hill,  
Did clasp the setting sun until



His rays dropped from him, pined and still  
As blossoms in frost !



Till he waned and paled, so weirdly crossed,  
To the colour of moonlight which doth pass

Over the dank ridged churchyard grass.  
The poplars held the sun, and he  
The eyes of the nurse that they should not see,  
Not for a moment, the babe on her knee,  
Though she shuddered to feel that it grew to be  
Too chill, and lay too heavily.

She only dreamed : for all the while  
'Twas Lady Isobel that kept  
The little baby,—and it slept  
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,  
Laden with love's dewy weight,  
And red as rose of Harpocrate  
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed  
Lashes to cheek in a sealèd rest.

And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well—  
She knew not that she smiled,  
Against the lattice dull and wild  
Drive the heavy droning drops,  
Drop by drop, the sound being one—  
As momentarily time's segments fall  
On the ear of God, who hears through all  
Eternity's unbroken monotone,  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well—

She knew not that she smiled.  
The wind in intermission stops  
Down in the beechen forest,  
Then cries aloud  
As one at the sorest,  
Self-stung, self-driven,  
And rises up to its very tops,  
Stiffening erect the branches bowed,  
Dilating with a tempest-soul  
The trees that with their dark hands break  
Through their own outline and heavily roll  
Shadows as massive as clouds in heaven,  
Across the castle lake.  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well :  
She knew not that she smiled ;  
She knew not that the storm was wild.  
Through the uproar drear she could not hear  
The castle clock which struck anear—  
She heard the low, light breathing of her child.

O sight for wondering look !  
While the external nature broke  
Into such abandonment,  
While the very mist heart-rent  
By the lightning, seemed to eddy  
Against nature, with a din,

A sense of silence and of steady  
Natural calm appeared to come  
From things without, and enter in  
The human creature's room.

So motionless she sate,  
The babe asleep upon her knees,  
You might have dreamed their souls had gone  
Away to things inanimate,  
In such to live, in such to moan ;  
And that their bodies had ta'en back,  
In mystic change, all silences  
That cross the sky in cloudy rack,  
Or dwell beneath the reedy ground  
In waters safe from their own sound.

Only she wore  
The deepening smile I named before,  
And *that* a deepening love expressed ;  
And who at once can love and rest ?

In sooth the smile that then was keeping  
Watch upon the baby sleeping,  
Floated with its tender light  
Downward, from the drooping eyes,  
Upward, from the lips apart,  
Over cheeks which had grown white  
With an eight-day weeping.

All smiles come in such a wise,  
Where tears shall fall or have of old—  
Like northern lights that fill the heart  
Of heaven in sign of cold.

Motionless she sate,  
Her hair had fallen by its weight  
On each side of her smile, and lay  
Very blackly on the arm  
Where the baby nestled warm,  
Pale as baby carved in stone  
Seen by glimpses of the moon  
Up a dark cathedral aisle.  
But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell  
Upon the child of Isobel—  
Perhaps you saw it by the ray  
Alone of her still smile.

A solemn thing it is to me  
To look upon a babe that sleeps ;  
Wearing in its spirit-deeps  
The undeveloped mystery  
Of our Adam's taint and woe,  
Which, when they developed be,  
Will not let it slumber so !  
Lying new in life beneath

The shadow of the coming death,  
With that soft, low, quiet breath,  
As if it felt the sun !  
Knowing all things by their blooms,  
Not their roots, yea, sun and sky,  
Only by their warmth that comes  
Out of each,—earth, only by  
The pleasant hues that o'er it run,—  
And human love, by drops of sweet  
White nourishment still hanging round  
The little mouth so slumber-bound.  
All which broken sentiency  
And conclusion incomplete,  
Will gather and unite and climb  
To an immortality  
Good or evil, each sublime,  
Through life and death to life again.  
O little lids now folded fast,  
Must ye learn to drop at last  
Our large and burning tears ?  
O warm quick body, must thou lie,  
When the time comes round to die,  
Still, from all the whirl of years,  
Bare of all the joy and pain ? —  
O small frail being, wilt thou stand  
At God's right hand,  
Lifting up those sleeping eyes  
Dilated by great destinies,

To an endless waking? thrones and seraphim,  
Through the long ranks of their solemnities,  
Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's surprise,

But thine alone on Him?—

Or else, self-willed, to tread the Godless place,  
(God keep thy will!) feel thine own energies  
Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead man's clasp,  
The sleepless deathless life within thee, grasp,—  
While myriad faces, like one changeless face,  
With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee everywhere,  
And overcome thee with thine own despair?

More soft, less solemn images

Drifted o'er the lady's heart,

Silently as snow.

She had seen eight days depart

Hour by hour, on bended knees,

With pale-wrung hands and prayings low

And broken, through which came the sound

Of tears that fell against the ground,

Making sad stops :—" Dear Lord, dear Lord !"

She still had prayed, (the heavenly word,

Broken by an earthly sigh)

—"Thou, who didst not erst deny

The mother-joy to Mary mild,

Blessèd in the blessèd child,

Which harkened in meek babyhood

Her cradle-hymn, albeit used  
To all that music interfused  
In breasts of angels high and good !  
Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—  
Oh, take not to thy songful heaven  
The pretty baby thou hast given,  
Or ere that I have seen him play  
Around his father's knees and known  
That *he* knew how my love has gone  
    From all the world to him.  
Think, God among the cherubim,  
How I shall shiver every day  
In thy June sunshine, knowing where  
The grave-grass keeps it from his fair  
Still cheeks ! and feel at every tread  
His little body which is dead  
And hidden in the turfy fold,  
Doth make thy whole warm earth a-cold !  
O God, I am so young, so young—  
I am not used to tears at nights  
Instead of slumber—nor to prayer  
With sobbing lips and hands out-wrung !  
Thou knowest all my prayings were  
‘I bless thee, God, for past delights—  
Thank God !’ I am not used to bear  
Hard thoughts of death ; the earth doth cover  
No face from me of friend or lover.  
And must the first who teaches me



The form of shrouds and funerals, be  
Mine own first-born beloved ? he  
Who taught me first this mother-love !  
Dear Lord, who spreadest out above  
Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet  
All lifted hearts with blessings sweet,—  
Pierce not my heart, my tender heart,  
Thou madest tender ! Thou who art  
So happy in thy heaven always !  
Take not mine only bliss away !”

She so had prayed : and God, who hears  
Through seraph-songs the sound of tears,  
From that beloved babe had ta'en  
The fever and the beating pain.  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well,  
    (She knew not that she smiled I wis)  
Until the pleasant gradual thought  
Which near her heart the smile enwrought,  
Now soft and slow, itself, did seem  
To float along a happy dream,  
    Beyond it into speech like this.

“I prayed for thee, my little child,  
And God has heard my prayer !

And when thy babyhood is gone,  
We two together undefiled  
By men's repinings, will kneel down  
Upon His earth which will be fair  
(Not covering thee, sweet !) to us twain,  
And give him thankful praise."

Dully and wildly drives the rain.  
Against the lattices drives the rain.

"I thank Him now, that I can think  
Of those same future days,  
Nor from the harmless image shrink  
Of what I there might see—  
Strange babies on their mothers' knee,  
Whose innocent soft faces might  
From off mine eyelids strike the light,  
With looks not meant for me !"

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,  
As against the lattices drives the rain.

"But now, O baby mine, together,  
We turn this hope of ours again  
To many an hour of summer weather,  
When we shall sit and intertwine  
Our spirits, and instruct each other

In the pure loves of child and mother !  
Two human loves make one divine."

The thunder tears through the wind and the rain,  
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

"My little child, what wilt thou choose?  
Now let me look at thee and ponder.  
What gladness, from the gladnesses  
Futurity is spreading under  
Thy gladsome sight? Beneath the trees  
Wilt thou lean all day, and lose  
Thy spirit with the river seen  
Intermittently between  
The winding beechen alleys,—  
Half in labour, half repose,  
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,  
Thou, with only thoughts to keep  
Which never a bound will overpass,  
And which are innocent as those  
That feed among Arcadian valleys  
Upon the dewy grass?"

The large white owl that with age is blind,  
That hath sate for years in the old tree hollow,  
Is carried away in a gust of wind !  
His wings could bear him not as fast

As he goeth now the lattice past—  
He is borne by the winds ; the rains do follow :  
His white wings to the blast out-flowing,  
    He hooteth in going,  
And still, in the lightnings, coldly glitter  
    His round unblinking eyes.

“ Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter  
To be eloquent and wise,—  
One upon whose lips the air  
Turns to solemn verities,  
For men to breathe anew and win  
A deeper-seated life within ?  
Wilt be a philosopher,  
By whose voice the earth and skies  
Shall speak to the unborn ?  
Or a poet, broadly spreading  
The golden immortalities  
Of thy soul on natures lorn  
And poor of such, them all to guard  
From their decay,—beneath thy treading,  
Earth's flowers recovering hues of Eden,—  
And stars drawn downward by thy looks,  
To shine ascendant in thy books ? ”

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,  
How it screams to the lightning, with its wet

Jagged plumes overhanging the parapet !  
 And at the lady's door the hound  
     Scratches with a crying sound.

“ But, O my babe, thy lids are laid  
     Close, fast upon thy cheek,—  
 And not a dream of power and sheen  
 Can make a passage up between ;  
 Thy heart is of thy mother's made,  
     Thy looks are very meek ;  
 And it will be their chosen place  
 To rest on some beloved face,  
 As these on thine—and let the noise  
 Of the whole world go on, nor drown  
     The tender silence of thy joys !  
 Or when that silence shall have grown  
 Too tender for itself, the same  
 Yearning for sound,—to look above  
 And utter its one meaning, love,  
     That *He* may hear His name !”

No wind, no rain, no thunder !  
 The waters had trickled not slowly,  
 The thunder was not spent,  
 Nor the wind near finishing.  
 Who would have said that the storm was  
     diminishing ?

No wind, no rain, no thunder !  
Their noises dropped asunder  
From the earth and the firmament,  
From the towers and the lattices,  
Abrupt and echoless  
As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken wholly—  
As life in death !  
And sudden and solemn the silence fell,  
Startling the heart of Isobel  
As the tempest could not.  
Against the door went panting the breath  
Of the lady's hound whose cry was still,  
And she, constrained howe'er she would not,  
Lifted her eyes, and saw the moon  
Looking out of heaven alone  
Upon the poplared hill,—  
A calm of God, made visible  
That men might bless it at their will.

The moonshine on the baby's face  
Falleth clear and cold.  
The mother's looks have fallen back  
To the same place ;  
Because no moon with silver rack,  
Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies  
Has power to hold  
Our loving eyes,

Which still revert as ever must  
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the dust.

The moonshine on the baby's face  
Cold and clear remaineth.  
The mother's looks do shrink away,—  
The mother's looks return to stay,  
As charmèd by what paineth.  
Is any glamour in the case?  
Is it dream or is it sight?  
Hath the change upon the wild  
Elements, that signs the night,  
Passed upon the child?  
It is not dream, but sight!—

The babe has awakened from sleep,  
And unto the gaze of its mother  
Bent over it, lifted another!  
Not the baby looks that go  
Unaimingly to and fro,  
But an earnest gazing deep,  
Such as soul gives soul at length,  
When, by work and wail of years,  
It winneth a solemn strength,  
And mourneth as it wears.  
A strong man could not brook  
With pulse unhurried by fears,

To meet that baby's look  
O'erglazed by manhood's tears—  
The tears of a man full grown,  
With a power to 'wring our own,  
In the eyes all undefiled  
Of a little three-months' child !  
To see that babe-brow wrought  
By the witnessing of thought,  
To judgment's prodigy !  
And the small soft mouth unweaned,  
By mother's kiss o'erleaned,  
(Putting the sound of loving  
Where no sound else was moving,  
Except the speechless cry)  
Quickened to mind's expression,  
Shaped to articulation,  
Yea, uttering words—yea, naming woe,  
In tones that with it strangely went,  
Because so baby-innocent,  
As the child spake out the mother so.—

“O mother, mother, loose thy prayer !  
Christ's name hath made it strong.  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me  
With its most loving cruelty,  
From floating my new soul along  
The happy heavenly air.



It bindeth me, it holdeth me  
 In all this dark, upon this dull  
 Low earth, by only weepers trod !—  
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me !—  
 Mine angel looketh sorrowful  
 Upon the face of God.\*

“Mother, mother, can I dream  
 Beneath your earthly trees ?  
 I had a vision and a gleam—  
 I heard a sound more sweet than these  
 When rippled by the wind.  
 Did you see the Dove with wings  
 Bathed in golden glisterings  
 From a sunless light behind,  
 Dropping on me from the sky  
 Soft as a mother's kiss until  
 I seemed to leap, and yet was still ?  
 Saw you how His love-large eye  
 Looked upon me mystic calms,  
 Till the power of his divine  
 Vision was indrawn to mine ?

“Oh, the dream within the dream !  
 I saw celestial places even.

---

\* For I say unto you, that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.—Matt. ch. xviii., ver. 10.

Oh, the vistas of high palms,  
Making finites of delight  
Through the heavenly infinite—  
Lifting up their green still tops

To the heaven of Heaven !

Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops  
Shade like light across the river  
Glorified in its for ever

Flowing from the Throne !

Oh, the shining holinesses  
Of the thousand, thousand faces  
God-sunned by the thronèd ONE !  
And made intense with such a love,  
That though I saw them turned above,  
Each loving seemed for also me !  
And, oh, the Unspeakable, the HE,  
The manifest in secrecies,  
Yet of mine own heart partaker,—  
With the overcoming look  
Of One who hath been once forsook,  
And blessèd the forsaker.

Mother, mother, let me go  
Toward the Face that looketh so.  
Through the mystic, wingèd Four  
Whose are inward, outward eyes  
Dark with light of mysteries,  
And the restless evermore  
'Holy, holy, holy,'—through

The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view  
Of cherubim and seraphim,—  
Through the four-and-twenty crowned  
Stately elders, white around,  
Suffer me to go to Him !

“ Is your wisdom very wise,  
Mother, on the narrow earth,  
Very happy, very worth  
That I should stay to learn ?  
Are these air-corrupting sighs  
Fashioned by unlearnèd breath ?  
Do the students' lamps that burn  
All night, illumine death ?  
Mother, albeit this be so,  
Loose thy prayer, and let me go  
Where that bright chief angel stands  
Apart from all his brother bands,  
Too glad for smiling, having bent  
In angelic wilderment  
O'er the depths of God, and brought  
Reeling thence, one only thought  
To fill his whole eternity.  
He the teacher is for me !—  
He can teach what I would know—  
Mother, mother, let me go !

“Can your poet make an Eden  
No winter will undo,  
And light a starry fire while heeding  
His hearth’s is burning too?  
Drown in music the earth’s din,  
And keep his own wild soul within  
The law of his own harmony?—  
Mother, albeit this be so,  
Let me to my Heavèn go!  
A little harp me waits thereby—  
A harp whose strings are golden all,  
And tuned to music spherical,  
Hanging on the green life-tree  
Where no willows ever be.  
Shall I miss that harp of mine?  
Mother, no!—the Eye divine  
Turned upon it, makes it shine;  
And when I touch it, poems sweet  
Like separate souls shall fly from it,  
Each to an immortal fyte.  
We shall all be poets there,  
Gazing on the chiefest Fair.

“Love! earth’s love! and *can* we love  
Fixedly where all things move?  
Can the sinning love each other?

Mother, mother,  
I tremble in thy close embrace,  
I feel thy tears adown my face,  
Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—

O dreary earthly love !

Loose thy prayer and let me go  
To the place which loving is,  
Yet not sad ; and when is given  
Escape to *thee* from this below,  
Thou shalt behold me that I wait  
For thee beside the happy Gate,  
And silence shall be up in heaven  
To hear our greeting kiss."

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,  
And starts to see beside her bed  
The lady with a grandeur spread  
Like pathos o'er her face,—as one  
God-satisfied and earth-undone.

The babe upon her arm was dead !  
And the nurse could utter forth no cry,—  
She was awed by the calm in the mother's eye.

"Wake, nurse !" the lady said ;  
"We are waking—he and I—  
I, on earth, and he, in sky !

And thou must help me to o'erlay  
With garment white, this little clay  
Which needs no more our lullaby.

“I changed the cruel prayer I made,  
And bowed my meekened face, and prayed  
That God would do His will ! and thus  
He did it, nurse ! He parted *us*.  
And His sun shows victorious  
The dead calm face,—and *I* am calm,  
And Heaven is harkening a new psalm.

“This earthly noise is too anear,  
Too loud, and will not let me hear  
The little harp. My death will soon  
Make silence.”

And a sense of tune,  
A satisfièd love meanwhile  
Which nothing earthly could despoil,  
Sang on within her soul.

Oh you,  
Earth's tender and impassioned few,  
Take courage to intrust your love

To Him so Named, who guards above  
 Its ends, and shall fulfil !  
 Breaking the narrow prayers that may  
 Belit your narrow hearts, away  
 In His broad, loving will.

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• THE PET-NAME.

———— the name  
 Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress.  
 MISS MITFORD'S *Dramatic Scenes*.

I HAVE a name, a little name,  
 Uncadenced for the ear,  
 Unhonoured by ancestral claim,  
 Unsanctified by prayer and psalm  
 The solemn font anear.

It never did, to pages wove  
 For gay romance, belong.  
 It never dedicate did move  
 As "Sacharissa," unto love—  
 "Orinda," unto song.

Though I write books it will be read  
 Upon the leaves of none,

And afterward, when I am dead,  
Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,  
Across my funeral-stone.

This name, whoever chance to call,  
Perhaps your smile may win.  
Nay, do not smile ! mine eyelids fall  
Over mine eyes, and feel withal  
The sudden tears within.

Is there a leaf that greenly grows  
Where summer meadows bloom,  
But gathereth the winter snows,  
And changeth to the hue of those,  
If lasting till they come ?

Is there a word, or jest, or game,  
But time incrusteth round  
With sad associate thoughts the same ?  
And so to me my very name  
Assumes a mournful sound.

My brother gave that name to me  
When we were children twain,—  
When names acquired baptismally  
Were hard to utter, as to see  
That life had any pain.



No shade was on us then, save one  
Of chestnuts from the hill—  
And through the word our laugh did run  
As part thereof. The mirth being done,  
He calls me by it still.

Nay, do not smile ! I hear in it  
What none of you can hear,—  
The talk upon the willow seat,  
The bird and wind that did repeat  
Around, our human cheer.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,  
My sister's woodland glee,—  
My father's praise, I did not miss,  
When stooping down he cared to kiss  
The poet at his knee,—

And voices, which, to name me, aye  
Their tenderest tones were keeping—  
To some I never more can say  
An answer, till God wipes away  
In heaven these drops of weeping.

My name to me a sadness wears,  
No murmurs cross my mind.

Now God be thanked for these thick tears,  
Which show, of those departed years,  
Sweet memories left behind.

Now God be thanked for years inwrought  
With love which softens yet.  
Now God be thanked for every thought  
Which is so tender it has caught  
Earth's guerdon of regret.

Earth saddens, never shall remove  
Affections purely given ;  
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove  
The immortality of love,  
And heighten it with Heaven.





## THE MOURNING MOTHER

(OF THE DEAD BLIND).

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,  
For thy blind boy in the grave?  
That no more with each other,  
Sweet counsel ye can have?—  
That he, left dark by nature,  
Can never more be led  
By thee, maternal creature,  
Along smooth paths instead?  
That thou canst no more show him  
The sunshine, by the heat;  
The river's silver flowing,  
By murmurs at his feet?  
The foliage, by its coolness;  
The roses, by their smell;  
And all creation's fulness,  
By Love's invisible?  
Weepest thou to behold not  
His meek blind eyes again,—

Closed doorways which were folded,  
And prayed against in vain—  
And under which, sate smiling  
The child-mouth evermore,  
As one who watcheth, wiling  
The time by, at a door?  
And weepst thou to feel not  
His clinging hand on thine—  
Which now, at dream-time, will not  
Its cold touch disentwine?  
And weepst thou still oft,  
Oh, never more to mark  
His low soft words, made softer  
By speaking in the dark?  
Weep on, thou mourning mother!

But since to him when living  
Thou wast both sun and moon,  
Look o'er his grave, surviving  
From a high sphere alone.  
Sustain that exaltation,  
Expand that tender light,  
And hold in mother-passion  
Thy Blessèd in thy sight.  
See how he went out straightway  
From the dark world he knew,—  
No twilight in the gateway

To mediate 'twixt the two,—  
Into the sudden glory,  
Out of the dark he trod,  
Departing from before thee  
At once to light and God !—  
For the first face, beholding  
The Christ's in its divine,  
For the first place, the golden  
And tideless hyaline ;  
With trees, at lasting summer,  
That rock to songful sound,  
While angels, the new-comer,  
Wrap a still smile around.  
Oh, in the blessed psalm now,  
His happy voice he tries,  
Spreading a thicker palm-bough,  
Than others, o'er his eyes !  
Yet still, in all the singing,  
Thinks haply of thy song  
Which, in his life's first springing,  
Sang to him all night long ;  
And wishes it beside him,  
With kissing lips that cool  
And soft did overglide him,  
To make the sweetness full.  
Look up, O mourning mother,  
Thy blind boy walks in light ;  
Ye wait for one another,

Before God's infinite,  
But thou art now the darkest,  
Thou mother left below—  
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,  
Content that it be so,—  
Until ye two have meeting  
Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,  
And *he* shall lead thy feet in,  
As once thou leddest *his*.  
Wait on, thou mourning mother.

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#### RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

To the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,  
*Toll slowly.*  
And the oldest ringer said, "Ours is music for the Dead,  
When the rebecks are all done."

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the northside in a row,  
*Toll slowly.*  
And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes  
Of the grassy graves below.

On the south side and the west, a small river runs in haste,  
*Toll slowly.*

And between the river flowing and the fair green trees  
a-growing

Do the dead lie at their rest.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow gray.

*Toll slowly.*

Through the rain of willow-branches, I could see the low  
hill ranges,

And the river on its way.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly,

*Toll slowly.*

While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the sol-  
emn noises,—

Yet death seemed more loud to me.

There, I read this ancient rhyme, while the bell did all the  
time

*Toll slowly.*

And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,

Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME.

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged—

*Toll slowly.*

And three hundred years had stood mute adown each hoary  
wood,

Like a full heart having prayed.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,  
*Toll slowly.*

And but little thought was theirs of the silent antique years,  
In the building of their nest.

Down the sun dropt large and red, on the towers of  
Linteged,—

*Toll slowly.*

Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in fiery  
light,

While the castle stood in shade.

There, the castle stood up black, with the red sun at its  
back,—

*Toll slowly.*

Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a top that flickers fire  
When the wind is on its track.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall,  
*Toll slowly.*

And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights  
had stood,

And to-night was near its fall.



Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride  
did come,—

*Toll slowly.*

One who proudly trod the floors, and softly whispered in  
the doors,

“May good angels bless our home.”

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies !

*Toll slowly.*

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where the untired smile of  
youth

Did light outward its own sighs.

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward, the  
Earl ;

*Toll slowly.*

Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry  
gold,

To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

But what time she had made good all her years of woman-  
hood,

*Toll slowly.*

Unto both those lords of Leigh, spake she out right sov-  
ranly,

“My will runneth as my blood.

“And while this same blood makes red the same right  
hand’s veins,” she said,—

*Toll slowly.*

“’Tis my will as lady free, not to wed a lord of Leigh,  
But Sir Guy of Linteged.”

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful  
youth,—

*Toll slowly.*

“Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft  
and small

For so large a will, in sooth.”

She too, smiled by that same sign,—but her smile was cold  
and fine,—

*Toll slowly.*

“Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it were not worth the  
hold

Of thy son, good uncle mine !”

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in  
his teeth,

*Toll slowly.*

“He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an she  
loathed,

Let the life come or the death.”

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child might  
rise,—

*Toll slowly.*

“Thy hound's blood, my lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly  
heel,” quoth she,

“And he moans not where he lies.

“But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the  
sward !”—

*Toll slowly.*

“By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl  
and dowered lady,

I deny you wife and ward.”

Unto each she bowed her head, and swept past with lofty  
tread.

*Toll slowly.*

Ere the midnight bell had ceased, in the chapel had the  
priest

Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode  
amain.

*Toll slowly.*

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on  
the turf,

In the pauses of the rain.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pursued  
amain—

*Toll slowly.*

Steed on steed-track, dashing off—thickening, doubling,  
hoof on hoof,

In the pauses of the rain.

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan steed of  
might,

*Toll slowly.*

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,  
Smiling out into the night.

“Dost thou fear?” he said at last—“Nay,” she answered  
him in haste,—

*Toll slowly.*

“Not such death as we could find—only life with one  
behind—

Ride on fast as fear—ride fast !”

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and  
fetlocks spread,—

*Toll slowly.*

Headlong bounds and rocking flanks,—down he staggered,  
down the banks,

To the towers of Linteged.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed  
about,—

*Toll slowly.*



In the courtyard rose the cry—"Live the Duchess and Sir  
Guy!"

But she never heard them shout.

On the steed she dropt her cheek, kissed his mane and  
kissed his neck,—

*Toll slowly.*

“I had happier died by thee, than lived on a Lady Leigh,”  
Were the first words she did speak.

But a three months’ joyaunce lay ’twixt that moment and  
to-day,

*Toll slowly.*

When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle  
wall,

To recapture Duchess May.

And the castle standeth black, with the red sun at its  
back,—

*Toll slowly.*

And a fortnight’s siege is done—and, except the duchess,  
none

Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so gray  
of blee,

*Toll slowly.*

And thin lips that scarcely sheathe the cold white gnashing  
of his teeth,

Gnashed in smiling, absently,

Cried aloud, "So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess  
May!"—

*Toll slowly.*

"Look thy last upon that sun! if thou seest to-morrow's  
one,

'Twill be through a foot of clay.

"Ha, fair bride! dost hear no sound, save that moaning of  
the hound!"

*Toll slowly.*

"Thou and I have parted troth,—yet I keep my vengeance-  
oath,

And the other may come round.

"Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past  
compare,"—

*Toll slowly.*

"Yet thine old love's faulchion brave is as strong a thing  
to have,

As the will of lady fair.

"Peck on blindly, netted dove!—If a wife's name thee  
behove,"

*Toll slowly.*

"Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has  
hid the sorrow

Of thy last ill-mated love.

“ O’er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back  
troth,”

*Toll slowly.*

“ He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least  
‘ I forbid you—I am loth !’

“ I will wring thy fingers pale in the gauntlet of my mail.”

*Toll slowly.*

“ ‘ Little hand and muckle gold’ close shall lie within my  
hold, ‘

As the sword did, to prevail.”

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,

*Toll slowly.*

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put  
away

All his boasting for a jest.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—

*Toll slowly.*

“ Tower is strong and will is free—thou canst boast, my  
lord of Leigh,

But thou boastest little wit.”

In her tire-glass gazèd she, and she blushed right womanly.

*Toll slowly.*



She blushed half from her disdain—half, her beauty was so plain,

—“Oath for oath, my lord of Leigh!”

Straight she called her maidens in—“Since ye gave me blame herein,”

*Toll slowly.*

“That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it fine,

Come and shrive me from that sin.

“It is three months gone to-day, since I gave mine hand away.”

*Toll slowly.*

“Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-state in them,

While we keep the foe at bay.

“On your arms I loose mine hair!—comb it smooth and crown it fair.”

*Toll slowly.*

“I would look in purple pall from the lattice down the wall,  
And throw scorn to one that’s there!”

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west.

*Toll slowly.*

On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his sword,  
With an anguish in his breast.

With a spirit-laden weight, did he lean down passionate.

*Toll slowly.*

They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter there-  
withal.

With no knocking at the gate.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered, snapped upon the  
stone,—

*Toll slowly.*

“Sword,” he thought, with inward laugh, “ill thou servest  
for a staff

When thy nobler use is done !

“Sword, thy nobler use is done !—tower is lost, and shame  
begun !”—

*Toll slowly.*

“If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to  
speech,

We should die there, each for one.

“If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly  
fall.”—

*Toll slowly.*

“But if I die here alone,—then I die, who am but one,  
And die nobly for them all.

“Five true friends lie for my sake, in the moat and in the  
brake,”—

*Toll slowly.*

“Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a black wound in the  
breast,  
And not one of these will wake.

“So no more of this shall be!—heart-blood weighs too  
heavily,”—

*Toll slowly.*

“And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the  
brave  
Heaped around and over me.

“Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a  
plighted faith,”—

*Toll slowly.*

“Since my pale young sister’s cheeks blush like rose when  
Ronald speaks,  
Albeit never a word she saith—

“These shall never die for me—life-blood falls too heavily :”  
*Toll slowly.*

“And if *I* die here apart,—o’er my dead and silent heart  
They shall pass out safe and free.

“When the foe hath heard it said—‘Death holds Guy of  
Linteged,’”

*Toll slowly.*

“That new corse new peace shall bring, and a blessed  
blessèd thing  
Shall the stone be at its head.

“Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my  
memory”—

*Toll slowly.*

“Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my  
widowed bride  
Whose sole sin was love of me.

“With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her  
and entreat,”

*Toll slowly.*

“And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting  
head

While her tears drop over it.

“She will weep her woman’s tears, she will pray her  
woman’s prayers,”—

*Toll slowly.*

“But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring  
again

By the suntime of her years.

“Ah, sweet May ! ah, sweetest grief !—once I vowed thee  
my belief,”

*Toll slowly.*

“That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets,  
in completeness !

Now my May-day seemeth brief.”

All these silent thoughts did swim o’er his eyes grown  
strange and dim,—

*Toll slowly.*

Till his true men in the place, wished they stood there face  
to face

With the foe instead of him.

“One last oath, my friends that wear faithful hearts to do  
and dare !”—

*Toll slowly.*

“Tower must fall, and bride be lost !—swear me service  
worth the cost !”

—Bold they stood around to swear.

“Each man clasp my hand and swear, by the deed we failed  
in there,”

*Toll slowly.*

"Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow to-night!"

—Pale they stood around to swear.

"One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to do and dare!"—

*Toll slowly.*

"Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before you all!

Guide him up the turret-stair.

"Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this height."

*Toll slowly.*

"Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me strong and far.

He shall bear me far to-night."

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him speaking so.

*Toll slowly.*

—" 'Las! the noble heart," they thought,—“he in sooth is grief distraught.

Would we stood here with the foe!"

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt their thought and their reply,—

*Toll slowly.*

“Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here,  
must ride fast,  
As we wish our foes to fly.”

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he  
did wear,

*Toll slowly.*

Past the court, and through the doors, across the rushes of  
the floors,

But they goad him up the stair.

Then from out her bower chambère, did the Duchess May  
repair.

*Toll slowly.*

“Tell me now what is your need,” said the lady, “of this  
steed,

That ye goad him up the stair.”

Calm she stood ; unbodkined through, fell her dark hair to  
her shoe,—

*Toll slowly.*

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,  
Had not time enough to go.

“Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like  
yesterday,”—

*Toll slowly.*

“One half hour completes the breach ; and thy lord grows  
wild of speech !

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

“In the east tower, high’st of all, loud he cries for steed  
from stall.”

*Toll slowly.*

“He would ride as far,” quoth he, “as for love and victory,  
Though he rides the castle-wall.”

“And we fetched the steed from stall, up where never a hoof  
did fall.”—

*Toll slowly.*

“Wifely prayer meets deathly need ! may the sweet Heav-  
ens hear thee plead  
If he rides the castle-wall.”

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on  
the floor,—

*Toll slowly.*

And tear after tear you heard fall distinct as any word  
Which you might be listening for.

“Get thee in, thou soft ladye !—here, is never a place for  
thee !”

*Toll slowly.*



“Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in  
its moan

May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.”

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face,

*Toll slowly.*

Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering,  
seems to look

Right against the thunder place.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone  
beside.—

*Toll slowly.*

“Go to, faithful friends, go to !—judge no more what ladies  
do,—

No, nor how their lords may ride !”

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss  
and stroke :

*Toll slowly.*

Soft he neighed to answer her, and then followed up the  
stair,

For the love of her sweet look.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around !

*Toll slowly.*

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her  
treading,

Did he follow, meek as hound.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there where never a hoof  
did fall,—

*Toll slowly.*

Out they swept a vision steady,—noble steed and lovely  
lady,

Calm as if in bower or stall.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up  
silently,—

*Toll slowly.*

And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her  
eyes,

Which he could not bear to see.

Quoth he, “Get thee from this strife,—and the sweet saints  
bless thy life !”—

*Toll slowly.*

“In this hour, I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed,  
But no more of my noble wife.”

Quoth she, “Meekly have I done all thy biddings under  
sun ;”

*Toll slowly.*

“But by all my womanhood, which is proved so, true and good,

I will never do this one.

“Now by womanhood’s degree, and by wifehood’s verity,”

*Toll slowly.*

“In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,

Thou hast also need of *me*.

“By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardiè,”

*Toll slowly.*

“If, this hour, on castle-wall, can be room for steed from stall,

Shall be also room for *me*.

“So the sweet saints with me be,” (did she utter solemnly)

*Toll slowly.*

“If a man, this eventide, on this castle wall will ride,

He shall ride the same with *me*.”

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he laughed out bitter-well,

*Toll slowly.*

“Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other eves,

To hear chime a vesper-bell?”

She clang closer to his knee—"Ay, beneath the cypress-tree!"—

*Toll slowly.*

"Mock me not, for elsewhere than along the greenwood fair,

Have I ridden fast with thee.

"Fast I rode with new-made vows, from my angry kinsman's house."

*Toll slowly.*

"What, and would you men should reckon that I dared more for love's sake

As a bride than as a spouse?

"What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all,"

*Toll slowly.*

"That a bride may keep your side while through castle-gate you ride,

Yet eschew the castle-wall?"

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and roars up against her suing,

*Toll slowly.*

With the inarticulate din, and the dreadful falling in—  
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

Twice he wrung her hands in twain, but the small hands  
closed again.

*Toll slowly.*

Back he reined the steed—back, back ! but she trailed  
along his track

With a frantic clasp and strain.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window and  
door,—

*Toll slowly.*

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of  
“ kill ! ” and “ flee ! ”

Strike up clear amid the roar.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain—but they closed and  
clung again,—

*Toll slowly.*

Wild she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon the  
rood,

In a spasm of deathly pain.

She clung wild and she clung mute, with her shuddering  
lips half shut.

*Toll slowly.*

Her head fallen as half in swoond,—hair and knee swept  
on the ground,

She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery  
coping-stone.

*Toll slowly.*

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement behind  
Whence a hundred feet went down.

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank  
bestrode,—

*Toll slowly.*

“Friends, and brothers, save my wife!—Pardon, sweet, in  
change for life,—

But I ride alone to God.”

Straight as if the Holy name had upbreathed her like a  
flame,

*Toll slowly.*

She upsprang, she rose upright,—in his selle she sate in  
sight,

By her love she overcame.

And her head was on his breast, where she smiled as one  
at rest,—

*Toll slowly.*

“Ring,” she cried, “O vesper-bell, in the beech-wood’s old  
chapelle !

But the passing-bell rings best.”

They have caught out at the rein, which Sir Guy threw  
loose—in vain,—

*Toll slowly.*

For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised  
in air,

On the last verge rears amain.

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and his nostrils curdle  
in !—

*Toll slowly.*

Now he shivers head and hoof—and the flakes of foam fall  
off,

And his face grows fierce and thin !

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did go,

*Toll slowly.*

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony

Of the headlong death below,—

And, “ Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,” still she cried, “ i’ the  
old chapelle !”—

*Toll slowly.*

Then back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung  
out to wrack,

Horse and riders overfell.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west,

*Toll slowly.*

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the churchyard, while  
the chime

Slowly tolled for one at rest.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did  
run,

*Toll slowly.*

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and  
its change,

Here, where all done lay undone.

And beneath a willow-tree, I a little grave did see,

*Toll slowly.*

Where was graved,—HERE UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-  
YEAR CHILD,

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE.

Then, O spirits, did I say, ye who rode so fast that day,—

*Toll slowly.*

Did star-wheels and angel wings, with their holy win-  
nowings,

Keep beside you all the way?



Though in passion ye would dash, with a blind and heavy  
crash,

*Toll slowly.*

Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the  
field,—

Though your heart and brain were rash,—

Now, your will is all unwilled—now, your pulses are all  
stilled !

*Toll slowly.*

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the  
child,

Whose small grave was lately filled.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now,

*Toll slowly.*

And the children might be bold to pluck the king-cups from  
your mould

Ere a month had let them grow.

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near in  
spring,

*Toll slowly.*

Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out  
on it,

Murmuring not at any thing.

In your patience ye are strong ; cold and heat ye take not  
wrong :

*Toll slowly.*

When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,  
Time will seem to you not long.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west,

*Toll slowly.*

And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with  
death,

And who knoweth which is best?

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west,

*Toll slowly.*

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our  
incompleteness,—

Round our restlessness, His rest.





## A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.

A. A. E. C.

BORN, JULY, 1848. DIED, NOVEMBER, 1849.

OF English blood, of Tuscan birth,  
What country should we give her?  
Instead of any on the earth,  
The civic Heavens receive her.

And here, among the English tombs,  
In Tuscan ground we lay her,  
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes  
Our English words of prayer.

A little child!—how long she lived,  
By months, not years, is reckoned:  
Born in one July, she survived  
Alone to see a second.

Bright featured, as the July sun  
Her little face still played in,

And splendours, with her birth begun,  
Had had no time for fading.

So, LILY, from those July hours,  
No wonder we should call her ;  
She looked such kinship to the flowers,  
Was but a little taller.

A Tuscan Lily,—only white,  
As Dante, in abhorrence  
Of red corruption, wished aright  
The lilies of his Florence.

We could not wish her whiter,—her  
Who perfumed with pure blossom  
The house !—a lovely thing to wear  
Upon a mother's bosom !

This July creature thought perhaps  
Our speech not worth assuming ;  
She sate upon her parents' laps,  
And mimicked the gnat's humming :

Said " father," " mother,"—then, left off,  
For tongues celestial, fitter.  
Her hair had grown just long enough  
To catch heaven's jasper-glitter.

Babes ! Love could always hear and see  
Behind the cloud that hid them.  
“Let little children come to me,  
And do not thou forbid them.”

So, unforbidding, have we met,  
And gently here have laid her,  
Though winter is no time to get  
The flowers that should o'erspread her.

We should bring pansies quick with spring,  
Rose, violet, daffodilly,  
And also, above every thing,  
White lilies for our Lily.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave exacts,—  
Glad, grateful attestations  
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,  
With calm renunciations.

Her very mother with light feet  
Should leave the place too earthy,  
Saying, “The angels have thee, Sweet,  
Because we are not worthy.”

But winter kills the orange buds,  
The gardens in the frost are,

And all the heart dissolves in floods,  
Remembering we have lost her !

Poor earth, poor heart,—too weak, too weak,  
To miss the July shining !  
Poor heart !—what bitter words we speak,  
When God speaks of resigning !

Sustain this heart in us that faints,  
Thou God, the self-existent !  
We catch up wild at parting saints,  
And feel thy Heaven too distant.

The wind that swept them out of sin,  
Has ruffled all our vesture.  
On the shut door that let them in,  
We beat with frantic gesture,—

To us, us also—open straight !  
The outer life is chilly—  
Are *we* too, like the earth, to wait  
Till next year for our Lily ?

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,  
My leaping, dimpled treasure,  
At every word I write like these,  
Clasped close, with stronger pressure !

Too well my own heart understands,—

At every word beats fuller—

My little feet, my little hands,

And hair of Lily's colour !

—But God gives patience, Love learns strength,

And Faith remembers promise,

And Hope itself can smile at length

On other hopes gone from us.

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer Death,

Through struggle, made more glorious.

This mother stills her sobbing breath,

Renouncing, yet victorious.

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts,

With spirit unbereaven,—

“God will not take back all His gifts ;

My Lily's mine in heaven !

“Still mine ! maternal rights serene

Not given to another !

The crystal bars shine faint between

The souls of child and mother.

“Meanwhile,” the mother cries, “content !

Our love was well divided.

Its sweetness following where she went,  
Its anguish stayed where I did.

“ Well done of God, to halve the lot,  
And give her all the sweetness ;  
To us, the empty room and cot,—  
To her, the Heaven’s completeness.

“ To us, this grave—to her, the rows  
The mystic palm-trees spring in.  
To us, the silence in the house,—  
To her, the choral singing.

“ For her, to gladden in God’s view,—  
For us, to hope and bear on !—  
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,  
Beside the rose of Sharon.

“ Grow fast in heaven, sweet Lily clipped,  
In love more calm than this is,—  
And may the angels dewy-lipped  
Remind thee of our kisses !

“ While none shall tell thee of our tears,  
These human tears now falling,  
Till, after a few patient years,  
One home shall take us all in.



“Child, father, mother—who, left out?  
Not mother, and not father!—  
And when, our dying couch about,  
The natural mists shall gather,

“Some smiling angel close shall stand  
In old Correggio’s fashion,  
And bear a LILY in his hand,  
For death’s ANNUNCIATION.”

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## ONLY A CURL.

FRIENDS of faces unknown and a land  
Unvisited over the sea,  
Who tell me how lonely you stand,  
With a single gold curl in the hand  
Held up to be looked at by me!—

While you ask me to ponder and say  
What a father and mother can do,  
With the bright yellow locks put away  
Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay,  
Where the violets press nearer than you :

Shall I speak like a poet, or run  
    Into weak woman's tears for relief?  
Oh, children ! I never lost one.  
But my arm's round my own little son,  
    And Love knows the secret of Grief.

And I feel what it must be and is  
    When God draws a new angel so  
Through the house of a man up to His,  
With a murmur of music you miss,  
    And a rapture of light you forego.

How you think, staring on at the door  
    Where the face of your angel flashed in,  
That its brightness, familiar before,  
Burns off from you ever the more  
    For the dark of your sorrow and sin.

"God lent him and takes him," you sigh . .  
    —Nay, there let me break with your pain ;  
God's generous in giving, say I,  
And the thing which he gives, I deny  
    That He ever can take back again.

He gives what he gives. I appeal  
    To all who bear babes ! In the hour

When the vail of the body we feel  
 Rent round us, while torments reveal  
 The motherhood's advent in power,

And the babe cries,—have all of us known  
 By apocalypse (God being there,  
 Full in nature !) the child is *our own*,—  
 Life of life, love of love, moan of moan,  
 Through all changes, all times, everywhere.

He's ours, and for ever. Believe,  
 O father !—O mother, look back  
 To the first love's assurance ! To give  
 Means, with God, not to tempt or deceive  
 With a cup thrust in Benjamin's sack.

He gives what he gives : be content.  
 He resumes nothing given,—be sure.  
 God lend ?—where the usurers lent  
 In His temple, indignant he went  
 And scourged away all those impure.

He lends not, but gives to the end,  
 As He loves to the end. If it seem  
 That He draws back a gift, comprehend  
 'Tis to add to it rather . . amend,  
 And finish it up to your dream,—

Or keep . . as a mother may toys

Too costly, though given by herself,  
Till the room shall be stiller from noise,  
And the children more fit for such joys,  
Kept over their heads on the shelf.

So look up, friends ! You who indeed

Have possessed in your house a sweet piece  
Of the Heaven which men strive for, must need  
Be more earnest than others are, speed  
Where they loiter, persist where they cease.

You know how one angel smiles there.

Then, courage ! 'Tis easy for you  
To be drawn by a single gold hair  
Of that curl, from earth's storm and despair  
To the safe place above us. Adieu !



## THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.

LITTLE Ellie sits alone  
'Mid the beeches of a meadow,  
By a stream-side on the grass,



And the trees are showering down  
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,  
On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by,  
And her feet she has been dipping  
In the shallow water's flow.  
Now she holds them nakedly  
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,  
While she rocketh to and fro.

Little Ellie sits alone,  
And the smile she softly uses,  
Fills the silence like a speech,  
While she thinks what shall be done,—  
And the sweetest pleasure chooses  
For her future within reach.

Little Ellie in her smile  
Chooses . . . "I will have a lover,  
Riding on a steed of steeds !  
He shall love me without guile.  
And to *him* I will discover  
The swan's nest among the reeds.

"And the steed shall be red-roan,  
And the lover shall be noble,  
With an eye that takes the breath.  
And the lute he plays upon,  
Shall strike ladies into trouble,  
As his sword strikes men to death.

“And the steed it shall be shod  
All in silver, housed in azure,  
And the mane shall swim the wind;  
And the hoofs along the sod  
Shall flash onward and keep measure,  
Till the shepherds look behind.

“But my lover will not prize  
All the glory that he rides in,  
When he gazes in my face.  
He will say, ‘O Love, thine eyes  
Build the shrine my soul abides in,  
And I kneel here for thy grace.’

“Then, ay, then—he shall kneel low,  
With the red-roan steed anear him  
Which shall seem to understand—  
Till I answer, ‘Rise and go!  
For the world must love and fear him  
Whom I gift with heart and hand.’

“Then he will arise so pale,  
I shall feel my own lips tremble  
With a *yes* I must not say,  
Nathless maiden-brave, ‘Farewell,’  
I will utter, and dissemble—  
‘Light to-morrow with to-day.’

“Then he’ll ride among the hills  
To the wide world past the river,  
There to put away all wrong ;  
To make straight distorted wills,  
And to empty the broad quiver  
Which the wicked bear along.

“Three times shali a young foot-page  
Swim the stream and climb the mountain  
And kneel down beside my feet—  
‘Lo, my master sends this gage,  
Lady, for thy pity’s counting !  
What wilt thou exchange for it ?”

“And the first time, I will send  
A white rosebud for a guerdon,—  
And the second time a glove ;  
But the third time—I may bend  
From my pride, and answer—‘ Pardon,  
If he comes to take my love.’

“Then the young foot-page will run—  
Then my lover will ride faster,  
Till he kneeleth at my knee :  
‘I am a duke’s eldest son !  
Thousand serfs do call me master,—  
But, O Love, I love but *thee*!’



“He will kiss me on the mouth  
Then, and lead me as a lover  
Through the crowds that praise his deeds :



And, when soul-tied by one troth  
Unto *him* I will discover  
That swan's nest among the reeds."

\* Little Ellie, with her smile  
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,  
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,  
And went homeward, round a mile,  
Just to see, as she did daily,  
What more eggs were with the two.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,  
Winding up the stream, light-hearted,  
Where the osier pathway leads—  
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.  
Lo, the wild swan had deserted—  
And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

Ellie went home sad and slow,  
If she found the lover ever,  
With his red-roan steed of steeds,  
Sooth I know not ! but I know  
She could never show him—never  
That swan's nest among the reeds !





## THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

WHEN ye stood up in the house  
With your little childish feet,  
And, in touching Life's first shows,  
First the touch of Love did meet,—  
Love and Nearness seeming one,  
By the heartlight cast before,  
And, of all Beloveds, none  
Standing farther than the door !  
Not a name being dear to thought,  
With its owner beyond call ;  
Nor a face, unless it brought  
Its own shadow to the wall ;  
When the worst recorded change  
Was of apple dropt from bough,  
When love's sorrow seemed more strange  
Than Love's treason can seem now,—  
Then, the Loving took you up  
Soft, upon their elder knees,—  
Telling why the statues droop  
Underneath the churchyard trees,

And how ye must lie beneath them  
Through the winters long and deep,  
Till the last trump overbreathe them,  
And ye smile out of your sleep . . .  
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they  
said

A tale of fairy ships  
With a swan-wing for a sail !—  
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips  
For the merry, merry tale !—  
So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead,

Soon ye read in solemn stories  
Of the men of long ago—  
Of the pale bewildering glories  
Shining farther than we know,  
Of the heroes with the laurel,  
Of the poets with the bay,  
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel  
For that beauteous Helena,  
How Achilles at the portal  
Of the tent, heard footsteps nigh,  
And his strong heart, half-immortal,  
Met the *keïtai* with a cry,  
How Ulysses left the sunlight  
For the pale eidola race  
Blank and passive through the dun light,

Staring blindly in his face,  
How that true wife said to Pœtus,  
With calm smile and wounded heart,



“Sweet, it hurts not !”—how Admetus  
Saw his blessed one depart.  
How King Arthur proved his mission,

And Sir Ronald wound his horn,  
And at Sangreal's moony vision  
Swords did bristle round like corn.  
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed the while  
ye read,  
That this Death, then, must be found  
A Valhalla for the crowned,  
The heroic who prevail.  
None, be sure, can enter in  
Far below a paladin  
Of a noble, noble tale !  
So awfully ye thought upon the Dead.

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,—  
As a child that wakes at night  
From a dream of sisters speaking  
In a garden's summer-light,—  
That wakes, starting up and bounding,  
In a lonely, lonely bed,  
With a wall of darkness round him.  
Stifling black about his head !—  
And the full sense of your mortal  
Rushed upon you deep and loud,  
And ye heard the thunder hurtle  
From the silence of the cloud !  
Funeral-torches at your gateway  
Threw a dreadful light within.

All things changed ! you rose up straightway  
And saluted Death and Sin.  
Since,—your outward man has rallied,  
And your eye and voice grown bold—  
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,  
With her saddest secret told,  
Happy places have grown holy.  
If ye went where once ye went,  
Only tears would fall down slowly,  
As at solemn sacrament.  
Merry books, once read for pastime,  
If ye dared to read again,  
Only memories of the last time  
Would swim darkly up the brain.  
Household names, which used to flutter  
Through your laughter unawares,  
God's divinest ye could utter  
With less trembling in your prayers !  
Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as  
if ye tread  
On your own hearts in the path  
Ye are called to in His wrath,—  
And your prayers go up in wail !  
—"Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,  
O Thou agonized on cross ?  
Art thou reading all its tale ?"  
So mournfully ye think upon the Dead.

Pray, pray, thou who also weepst,  
And the drops will slacken so.  
Weep, weep,—and the watch thou keepest,  
With a quicker count will go.  
Think,—the shadow on the dial  
For the nature most undone,  
Marks the passing of the trial,  
Proves the presence of the sun.  
Look, look up, in starry passion,  
To the throne above the spheres !  
Learn,—the spirit's gravitation  
Still must differ from the tear's.  
Hope,—with all the strength thou usest  
In embracing thy despair.  
Love,—the earthly love thou lovest  
Shall return to thee more fair.  
Work,—make clear the forest-tangles  
Of the wildest stranger-land.  
Trust,—the blessèd deathly angels  
Whisper, “Sabbath hours at hand !”  
By the heart's wound when most gory,  
By the longest agony,  
Smile !—Behold, in sudden glory  
The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee* !  
And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He  
said,  
“My Belovèd, is it so ?



Have ye tasted of my woe?  
 Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!"—  
 He stands brightly where the shade is,  
 With the keys of Death and Hades,  
 And there ends the mournful tale.—  
 So hopefully ye think upon the Dead.

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## THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.

But see, the Virgin blest  
 Hath laid her babe to rest.

MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity*.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One!  
 My flesh, my Lord!—what name? I do not know  
 A name that seemeth not too high or low,  
 Too far from me or heaven.  
 My Jesus, *that* is best! that word being given  
 By the majestic angel whose command  
 Was softly as a man's beseeching said,  
 When I and all the earth appeared to stand  
 In the great overflow  
 Of light celestial from his wings and head.  
 Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

And art thou come for saving, baby-browed  
 And speechless Being—art thou come for saving?

The palm that grows beside our door is bowed  
By treadings of the low wind from the south,  
A restless shadow through the chamber waving :  
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun ;  
But Thou, with that close slumber on thy mouth,  
Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.  
Art come for saving, O my weary One ?

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out the dreary  
Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy soul  
High dreams on fire with God ;  
High songs that make the pathways where they roll  
More bright than stars do theirs ; and visions new  
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.

Suffer this mother's kiss,  
Best thing that earthly is,  
To glide the music and the glory through,  
Nor narrow in thy dream the broad upliftings  
Of any seraph wing.  
Thus noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep, my dreaming One !

The slumber of His lips meseems to run  
Through *my* lips to mine heart,—to all its shiftings  
Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness  
In a great calm. I feel, I could lie down  
As Moses did, and die,\*—and then live most.

---

\* It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,  
That stand with your peculiar light unlost,  
Each forehead with a high thought for a crown,  
Unsunned i' the sunshine ! I am 'ware. Ye throw  
No shade against the wall ! How motionless  
Ye round me with your living statuary,  
While through your whiteness, in and outwardly,  
Continual thoughts of God appear to go,  
Like light's soul in itself. I bear, I bear,  
To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,  
Though their external shining testifies  
To that beatitude within, which were  
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.

I fall not on my sad clay face before ye,—

I look on His. I know

My spirit which dilateth with the woe

Of His mortality,

May well contain your glory.

Yea, drop your lids more low.

Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me !

Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One !

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem.

The dumb kine from their fodder turning them,

Softened their hornèd faces

To almost human gazes

Toward the newly Born.

The simple shepherds from the star-lit brooks  
    Brought visionary looks,  
As yet in their astonished hearing rung  
    The strange, sweet angel-tongue.  
The magi of the East, in sandals worn,  
    Knelt reverent, sweeping round,  
With long pale beards, their gifts upon the ground,  
    The incense, myrrh and gold  
These baby hands were impotent to hold.  
So, let all earthlies and celestials wait  
    Upon thy royal state.  
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest  
New meeknesses to hear such utterance rest  
On mortal lips,—“I am not proud”—*not proud !*  
Albeit in my flesh God sent his Son,  
Albeit over Him my head is bowed  
As others bow before Him, still mine heart  
Bows lower than their knees. O centuries  
That roll, in vision, your futurities  
    My future grave athwart,—  
Whose murmurs seem to reach me while I keep  
    Watch o'er this sleep,—  
Say of me as the Heavenly said—“Thou art  
The blesseddest of women !”—blesseddest,  
Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,

Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame,  
When I sit meek in heaven !

For me, for me,  
God knows that I am feeble like the rest —  
I often wandered forth, more child than maiden,  
Among the midnight hills of Galilee

Whose summits looked heaven-laden,  
Listening to silence as it seemed to be  
God's voice, so soft yet strong—so fain to press  
Upon my heart as Heaven did on the height,  
And waken up its shadows by a light,  
And show its vileness by a holiness.

Then I knelt down most silent like the night,

Too self-renounced for fears,  
Raising my small face to the boundless blue  
Whose stars did mix and tremble in my tears.  
God heard *them* falling after—with his dew.

So, seeing my corruption, can I see  
This Incorruptible now born of me,  
This fair new Innocence no sun did chance  
To shine on, (for even Adam was no child)  
Created from my nature all defiled,  
This mystery, from out mine ignorance,—  
Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption, more  
Than others do, or *I* did heretofore ?—  
Can hands wherein such burden pure has been,

Not open with the cry "unclean, unclean,"  
More oft than any else beneath the skies?

Ah King, ah Christ, ah son !  
The kine, the shepherds, the abasèd wise  
Must all less lowly wait  
Than I, upon thy state.—  
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

Art Thou a King, then ? Come, his universe,  
Come, crown me Him a King !  
Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling  
Their light where fell a curse,  
And make a crowning for this kingly brow !—  
What is my word ?—Each empyreal star  
Sits in a sphere afar  
In shining ambuscade.  
The child-brow, crowned by none,  
Keeps its unchildlike shade.  
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One !

Unchildlike shade !—No other babe doth wear  
An aspect very sorrowful, as thou.—  
No small babe-smiles, my watching heart has seen,  
To float like speech the speechless lips between.  
No dovelike cooing in the golden air,  
No quick short joys of leaping babyhood.

Alas, our earthly good  
In heaven thought evil, seems too good for Thee :  
Yet sleep, my weary One !

And then the drear sharp tongue of prophecy,  
With the dread sense of things which shall be done,  
Doth smite me inly, like a sword ! a sword ?—  
(*That* “smites the Shepherd.”) Then, I think aloud.  
The words “despised,”—“rejected,”—every word  
Recoiling into darkness as I view

The DARLING on my knee.  
Bright angels,—move not !—lest ye stir the cloud  
Betwixt my soul and His futurity !  
I must not die, with mother’s work to do,  
And could not live—and see.

It is enough to bear  
This image still and fair—  
This holier in sleep,  
Than a saint at prayer :  
This aspect of a child  
Who never sinned or smiled ;  
This Presence in an infant’s face ;  
This sadness most like love,  
This love than love more deep,  
This weakness like omnipotence,

It is so strong to move.  
Awful is this watching place,  
Awful what I see from hence—  
A king, without regalia,  
A God, without the thunder,  
A child, without the heart for play ;  
Ay, a Creator, rent asunder  
From his first glory and cast away  
On His own world, for me alone  
To hold in hands created, crying—Sax !

That tear fell not on thee,  
Beloved, yet thou stirrest in thy slumber !  
Thou, stirring not for glad sounds out of number  
Which through the vibratory palm-trees run  
From summer wind and bird,  
So quickly hast thou heard  
A tear fall silently ?—  
Wak'st thou, O loving One ?—







## THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

“Φεῦ, Φεῦ, τι πρὸς δερκεσθε μ’ ὁμμασιν. τέκνα.”

MEDEA.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,  
 Ere the sorrow comes with years?  
 They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,  
 And *that* cannot stop their tears.  
 The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,  
 The young birds are chirping in the nest,  
 The young fawns are playing with the shadows,  
 The young flowers are blowing toward the west—  
 But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
 They are weeping bitterly!  
 They are weeping in the playtime of the others,  
 In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,  
 Why their tears are falling so?  
 The old man may weep for his to-morrow  
 Which is lost in Long Ago.

The old tree is leafless in the forest,  
The old year is ending in the frost,  
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,  
The old hope is hardest to be lost.  
But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
Do you ask them why they stand  
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,  
In our happy Fatherland ?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,  
And their looks are sad to see,  
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses  
Down the cheeks of infancy.  
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary ;  
Our young feet," they say, "are very weak !  
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary--  
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.  
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children ;  
For the outside earth is cold ;  
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,  
And the graves are for the old.

"True," say the children, "it may happen  
That we die before our time.  
Little Alice died last year—her grave is shapen  
Like a snowball, in the rime.

We looked into the pit prepared to take her.

Was no room for any work in the close clay !  
From the sleep wherein she lieth, none will wake her,  
Crying, ' Get up, little Alice ! it is day.'  
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,  
With your ear down, little Alice never cries.  
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,  
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes.  
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in  
The shroud by the kirk-chime !  
It is good when it happens," say the children,  
" That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children ! they are seeking  
Death in life, as best to have.  
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,  
With a cerement from the grave.  
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,  
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do.  
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,  
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through !  
But they answer, " Are your cowslips of the meadows  
Like our weeds anear the mine ?  
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows  
From your pleasures fair and fine !

" For oh," say the children, " we are weary,  
And we cannot run or leap.

If we cared for any meadows, it were merely  
    To drop down in them and sleep.  
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,  
    We fall upon our faces, trying to go ;  
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,  
    The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.  
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring  
    Through the coal-dark, underground—  
Or, all day we drive the wheels of iron  
    In the factories, round and round.

“For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning,—  
    Their wind comes in our faces,—  
’Till our hearts turn,—our head, with pulses burning,  
    And the walls turn in their places.  
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,  
    Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,  
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,  
    All are turning, all the day, and we with all.  
And all day, the iron wheels are droning,  
    And sometimes we could pray,  
‘O ye wheels,’ (breaking out in a mad moaning)  
    ‘Stop ! be silent for to-day !’”

Aye ! be silent ! Let them hear each other breathing  
    For a moment, mouth to mouth !  
Let them touch each other’s hands in a fresh wreathling  
    Of their tender human youth !

Let them feel that this cold metallic motion  
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals.



Let them prove their living souls against the notion  
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels !—

Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,  
Grinding life down from its mark ;  
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,  
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,  
To look up to Him and pray ;  
So the blessèd One who blesseth all the others,  
Will bless them another day.  
They answer, "Who is God that he should hear us,  
While the rushing of the iron wheel is stirred ?  
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us,  
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.  
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)  
Strangers speaking at the door.  
Is it likely God, with angels singing round him,  
Hears our weeping any more ?

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,  
And at midnight's hour of harm,  
"Our Father," looking upward in the chamber,  
We say softly for a charm \*

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\* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet of "Orion" and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.—1844.

We know no other words, except "Our Father,"  
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,  
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,  
And hold both within his right hand which is strong.  
"Our Father!" If He heard us, He would surely  
(For they call him good and mild)  
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely.  
"Come and rest with me, my child."

"But no!" say the children, weeping faster,  
"He is speechless as a stone.  
And they tell us, of His image is the master  
Who commands us to work on.  
Go to!" say the children,— "up in Heaven,  
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.  
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving—  
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."  
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,  
O my brothers, what ye preach?  
For God's possible is taught by his world's loving,  
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!  
They are weary ere they run.  
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory  
Which is brighter than the sun.  
They know the grief of man, without his wisdom.

They sink in man's despair, without its calm ;  
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,  
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm,—  
Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievingly  
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—  
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.  
Let them weep ! let them weep !

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,  
And their look is dread to see,  
For they mind you of their angels in high places,  
With eyes turned on Deity !—  
“ How long,” they say, “ how long, O cruel nation,  
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—  
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,  
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart ?  
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,  
And your purple shows your path !  
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper  
Than the strong man in his wrath.







## THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me in the days departed,  
How often underneath the sun  
With childish bounds I used to run  
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite ;  
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,  
The greenest grasses Nature laid,  
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,  
For no one entered there but I.  
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,  
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,  
And spread their boughs enough about  
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,  
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !  
I crept beneath the boughs, and found  
A circle smooth of mossy ground  
    Beneath a poplar-tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,  
Bedropt with roses waxen white  
Well satisfied with dew and light  
    And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,  
When all the garden flowers were trim,  
The grave old gardener prided him  
    On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,  
Here moving with a silken noise,  
Has blushed beside them at the voice  
    That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,  
She often may have plucked and twined,  
Half-smiling as it came to mind  
    That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,  
A child would watch her fair white rose,

When buried lay her whiter brows,  
And silk was changed for shroud !—

Nor thought that gardener, (full of scorns  
For men unlearned and simple phrase,)  
A child would bring it all its praise,  
By creeping through the thorns !

To me upon my low moss seat,  
Though never a dream the roses sent  
Of science or love's compliment,  
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see  
The trace of human step departed.  
Because the garden was deserted,  
The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken,  
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sward :  
We draw the moral afterward—  
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide  
In silence at the rose-tree wall.  
A thrush made gladness musical  
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline  
To peck or pluck the blossoms white  
How should I know but roses might  
Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-home complete,  
I brought clear water from the spring  
Praised in its own low murmuring,—  
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew  
(Without the melancholy tale)  
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"  
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook  
Such minstrel stories ; till the breeze  
Made sounds poetic in the trees,—  
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write  
I hear no more the wind athwart  
Those trees,—nor feel that childish heart  
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,  
My footstep from the moss which drew

Its fairy circle round : anew  
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse  
The madrigals which sweetest are ;  
No more for me !—myself afar  
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay  
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,  
I laughed unto myself and thought  
“ The time will pass away.”

And still I laughed, and did not fear  
But that, whene'er was passed away  
The childish time, some happier play  
My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,  
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,  
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,  
Did I look up to pray !

The time is past ;—and now that grows  
The cypress high among the trees,  
And I behold white sepulchres  
As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,  
And I have learnt to lift my face,  
Reminded how earth's greenest place  
The colour draws from heaven,--

It something saith for earthly pain,  
But more for Heavenly promise free,  
That I who was, would shrink to be  
That happy child again.

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### HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

NINE years old ! The first of any  
Seem the happiest years that come.  
Yet when *I* was nine, I said  
No such word !—I thought instead  
That the Greeks had used as many  
In besieging Ilium.

Nine green years had scarcely brought me  
To my childhood's haunted spring.  
I had life, like flowers and bees  
In betwixt the country trees,  
And the sun the pleasure taught me  
Which he teacheth every thing.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,  
    Little head leant on the pane,  
    Little finger drawing down it  
    The long trailing drops upon it,  
And the "Rain, rain, come to-morrow,"  
    Said for charm against the rain.

Such a charm was right Canidian  
    Though you meet it with a jeer !  
    If I said it long enough,  
    Then the rain hummed dimly off,  
And the thrush with his pure Lydian  
    Was left only to the ear ;

And the sun and I together  
    Went a-rushing out of doors !  
    We, our tender spirits, drew  
    Over hill and dale in view,  
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,  
    In the footsteps of the showers.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,  
    Through the grasses wet and fair,  
    Straight I sought my garden-ground.  
    With the laurel on the mound,  
And the pear-tree oversweeping  
    A side-shadow of green air.

In the garden lay supinely  
A huge giant wrought of spade !  
Arms and legs were stretched at length,  
In a passive giant strength,—  
The fine meadow-turf, cut finely,  
Round them laid and interlaid.

Call him Hector, son of Priam !  
Such his title and degree.  
With my rake I smoothed his brow,  
Both his cheeks I weeded through,  
But a rhymers such as I am,  
Scarce can sing his dignity.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,  
Staring, winking at the skies.  
Nose of gillyflowers and box.  
Scented grasses put for locks,  
Which a little breeze, at pleasure,  
Set a-waving round his eyes.

Brazen helm of daffodillies,  
With a glitter toward the light.  
Purple violets for the mouth,  
Breathing perfumes west and south ;  
And a sword of flashing lilies,  
Holden ready for the fight.



And a breastplate made of daisies,  
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf.  
Periwinkles interlaced  
Drawn for belt about the waist ;  
While the brown bees, humming praises,  
Shot their arrows round the chief.

And who knows, (I sometimes wondered,)  
If the disembodied soul  
Of old Hector, once of Troy,  
Might not take a dreary joy  
Here to enter—if it thundered,  
Rolling up the thunder-roll ?

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,  
In this body rude and rife  
Just to enter, and take rest  
'Neath the daisies of the breast—  
They, with tender roots, renewing  
His heroic heart to life ?

Who could know ? I sometimes started  
At a motion or a sound !  
Did his mouth speak—naming Troy,  
With an *οτοτοτοτοτ* ?  
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted  
Make the daisies tremble round ?

It was hard to answer, often :  
But the birds sang in the tree—  
But the little birds sang bold  
In the pear-tree green and old,  
And my terror seemed to soften  
Through the courage of their glee.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy  
And white blossoms, sleek with rain !  
Oh, my garden, rich with pansies !  
Oh, my childhood's bright romances !  
All revive, like Hector's body,  
And I see them stir again !

And despite life's changes—chances,  
And despite the deathbell's toll,  
They press on me in full seeming !  
Help, some angel ! stay this dreaming !  
As the birds sang in the branches,  
Sing God's patience through my soul !

That no dreamer, no neglecter  
Of the present's work unsped,  
I may wake up and be doing,  
Life's heroic ends pursuing,  
Though my past is dead as Hector,  
And though Hector is twice dead.



TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE.

“ I have the second sight, Goethe ! ” — *Letters of a child.*

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,  
*Hadst* thou the second sight—  
 Upturning worship and delight  
 With such a loving duty  
 To his grand face, as women will,  
 The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still ?

Before his shrine to doom thee  
Using the same child's smile  
That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile  
For the first time, won from thee,  
Ere star and flower grew dim and dead,  
Save at his feet and o'er his head ?

Digging thine heart and throwing  
Away its childhood's gold,  
That so its woman-depth might hold  
His spirit's overflowing.  
For surging souls, no worlds can bound,  
Their channel in the heart have found.

O child, to change appointed,  
Thou hadst not second sight !  
What eyes the future view aright,  
Unless by tears anointed ?  
Yea, only tears themselves can show  
The burning ones that have to flow.

O woman, deeply loving,  
Thou hadst not second sight !  
The star is very high and bright,  
And none can see it moving.  
Love looks around, below, above,  
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

The bird thy childhood's playing  
Sent onward o'er the sea,  
Thy dove of hope came back to thee  
Without a leaf. Art laying  
Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,  
Still in thy bosom secretly?

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,  
I have the second sight!  
The stone upon his grave is white,  
The funeral stone between ye;  
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed  
Some change as hardly understood.

Where's childhood? where is Goethe?  
The tears are in thine eyes.  
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganize  
Thy maidenhood of beauty  
In his own glory, which is smooth  
Of wrinkles and sublime in youth

The poet's arms have wound thee,  
He breathes upon thy brow,  
He lifts thee upward in the glow  
Of his great genius round thee,—  
The child-like poet undefiled  
Preserving evermore THE CHILD.



## A SONG AGAINST SINGING.

TO E. J. H.

THEY bid me sing to thee,  
Thou golden-haired and silver-voicéd child,—  
With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's defiled,  
With eyes unknowing how tears dim the sight,  
And feet all trembling at the new delight  
Treaders of earth to be !

Ah no ! the lark may bring  
A song to thee from out the morning cloud,  
The merry river from its lilies bowed,  
The brisk rain from the trees, the lucky wind,  
That half doth make its music, half doth find,—  
But *I*—I may not sing.

How could I think it right,  
New-comer on our earth as, Sweet, thou art,  
To bring a verse from out an human heart  
Made heavy with accumulated tears,  
And cross with such amount of weary years  
Thy day-sum of delight ?

Even if the verse were said,  
Thou, who wouldst clap thy tiny hands to hear  
The wind or rain, gay bird or river clear,  
Wouldst, at that sound of sad humanities,  
Upturn thy bright uncomprehending eyes  
And bid me play instead.

Therefore no song of mine,—  
But prayer in place of singing; prayer that would  
Commend thee to the new-creating God,  
Whose gift is childhood's heart without its stain  
Of weakness, ignorance, and changing vain—  
That gift of God be thine !

So wilt thou aye be young,  
In lovelier childhood than thy shining brow  
And pretty winning accents make thee now.  
Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate sound  
(How sweet !) of "father," "mother," shall be found  
The ABBA on thy tongue.

And so, as years shall chase  
Each other's shadows, thou wilt less resemble  
Thy fellows of the earth who toil and tremble,  
Than him thou seest not, thine angel bold  
Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold  
The Ever-loving's face.



## SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,  
Tired of all the playing !  
Sleep with smile the sweeter for  
That you dropped away in !  
On your curls' full roundness, stand  
Golden lights serenely.  
One cheek, pushed out by the hand,  
Folds the dimple inly.  
Little head and little foot  
Heavy laid for pleasure,  
Underneath the lids half shut,  
Slants the shining azure.—  
Open soul in noonday sun,  
So, you lie and slumber !  
Nothing evil having done,  
Nothing can encumber.

I, who cannot sleep as well,  
Shall I sigh to view you ?



Or sigh further to foretell  
All that may undo you?  
Nay, keep smiling, little child,  
Ere the sorrow neareth.  
I will smile too ! patience mild  
Pleasure's token weareth.  
Nay, keep sleeping before loss.  
I shall sleep, though losing !  
As by cradle, so by cross,  
Sure is the reposing.

And God knows who sees us twain,  
Child at childish leisure,  
I am near as tired of pain  
As you seem of pleasure.  
Very soon too, by His grace  
Gently wrapt around me,  
Shall I show as calm a face,  
Shall I sleep as soundly.  
Differing in this, that you  
Clasp your playthings, sleeping,  
While my hand shall drop the few  
Given to my keeping.  
Differing in this, that I  
Sleeping shall be colder,  
And in waking presently,  
Brighter to beholder.

Differing in this beside  
    (Sleeper, have you heard me ?  
Do you move, and open wide  
    Eyes of wonder toward me !)—  
That while you I thus recall  
    From your sleep, I solely,  
Me from mine an angel shall,  
    With reveille holy.

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### THE LOST BOWER.

In the pleasant orchard closes,  
“God bless all our gains,” say we ;  
But “May God bless all our losses,”  
Better suits with our degree.  
Listen gentle—ay, and simple ! listen children on the knee !

Green the land is where my daily  
Steps in jocund childhood played,  
Dimpled close with hill and valley,  
Dappled very close with shade ;  
Summer-snow of apple blossoms running up from glade to  
glade.

There is one hill I see nearer  
In my vision of the rest ;

And a little wood seems clearer  
As it climbeth from the west,  
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland  
crest.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,  
And, completing the ascent,  
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles  
Thrills in leafy tremblement,  
Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth quickly through  
content.

Not a step the wood advances  
O'er the open hill-top's bound.  
There, in green arrest, the branches  
See their image on the ground :  
You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and  
glad with sound.

For you harken on your right hand,  
How the birds do leap and call  
In the greenwood, out of sight and  
Out of reach and fear of all ;  
And the squirrels crack the filberts through their cheerful  
madrigal.

On your left, the sheep are cropping  
The slant grass and daisies pale,

And five apple-trees stand dropping  
Separate shadows toward the vale,  
Over which in choral silence, the hills look you their "All  
hail !"

Far out, kindled by each other,  
Shining hills on hills arise,  
Close as brother leans to brother  
When they press beneath the eyes  
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

While beyond, above them mounted,  
And above their woods alsò,  
Malvern hills, for mountains counted  
Not unduly, loom a-row—  
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the sunshine  
and the snow.\*

Yet, in childhood, little prized I  
That fair walk and far survey.  
'Twas a straight walk unadvised by  
The least mischief worth a nay ;  
Up and down—as dull as grammar on the eve of holiday.

But the wood, all close and clenching  
Bough in bough and root in root,—

---

\* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langlande's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

No more sky (for overbranching)  
At your head than at your foot,—  
Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a glamour past dispute.

Few and broken paths showed through it,  
Where the sheep had tried to run,—  
Forced with snowy wool to strew it  
Round the thickets, when anon  
They with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into the  
sun.

But my childish heart beat stronger  
Than those thickets dared to grow :  
*I* could pierce them ! *I* could longer  
Travel on, methought, than so.  
Sheep for sheep-paths ! braver children climb and creep  
where they would go.

And the poets wander, said I,  
Over places all as rude.  
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady  
Sate to meet him in a wood  
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

And if Chaucer had not travelled  
Through a forest by a well,

He had never dreamt nor marvelled  
At those ladies fair and fell  
Who lived smiling without loving in their island-citadel.

Thus I thought of the old singers,  
And took courage from their song,  
Till my little struggling fingers  
Tore asunder gyve and thong  
Of the brambles which entrapped me, and the barrier  
branches strong.

On a day, such pastime keeping,  
With a fawn's heart debonair,  
Under-crawling, overleaping  
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,  
I stood suddenly astonished—I was gladdened unaware.

From the place I stood in, floated  
Back the covert dim and close,  
And the open ground was coated  
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,  
And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily across.

Here a linden-tree stood, brightning  
All adown its silver rind ;  
For as some trees draw the lightning,

So this tree, unto my mind,  
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from the sky where it  
was shrined.



Tall the linden-tree, and near it  
An old hawthorn also grew ;

And wood-ivy like a spirit  
Hovered dimly round the two,  
Shaping thence that bower of beauty which I sing of thus  
to you.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter  
Than for any woodland wide.  
Though a fresh and dewy glitter  
Struck it through from side to side,  
Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning  
plied.

Oh, a lady might have come there,  
Hooded fairly like her hawk,  
With a book or lute in summer,  
And a hope of sweeter talk—  
Listening less to her owl music than for footsteps on the  
walk.

But that bower appeared a marvel  
In the wildness of the place ;  
With such seeming art and travail,  
Finely fixed and fitted was  
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the  
base.

And the ivy veined and glossy  
Was enwrought with eglantine ;  
And the wild hop fibred closely,



And the large-leaved columbine,  
Arch of door and window mullion, did right sylvanly  
entwine.

Rose-trees either side the door were  
Growing lithe and growing tall,  
Each one set a summer warder  
For the keeping of the hall,—  
With a red rose and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the  
wall.

As I entered—mosses hushing  
Stole all noises from my foot ;  
And a green elastic cushion,  
Clasped within the linden's root,  
Took me in a chair of silence very rare and absolute.

All the floor was paved with glory,  
Greenly, silently inlaid,  
(Through quick motions made before me)  
With fair counterparts in shade  
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead.

“Is such pavement in a palace?”  
So I questioned in my thought.  
The sun, shining through the chalice  
Of the red rose hung without,  
Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt.

At the same time, on the linen  
Of my childish lap there fell  
Two white may-leaves, downward winning  
Through the ceiling's miracle,  
From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing  
well

Down to floor and up to ceiling  
Quick I turned my childish face,  
With an innocent appealing  
For the secret of the place  
To the trees, which surely knew it, in partaking of the  
grace.

Where's no foot of human creature,  
How could reach a human hand?  
And if this be work of nature,  
Why has nature turned so bland,  
Breaking off from other wild work? It was hard to under-  
stand.

Was she weary of rough-doing,—  
Of the bramble and the thorn?  
Did she pause in tender rueing  
Here of all her sylvan scorn?  
Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the sudden mildness  
worn?

Or could this same bower (I fancied)  
Be the work of Dryad strong,

Who, surviving all that chanced  
In the world's old pagan wrong,  
Lay hid, feeling in the woodland on the last true poet's song?

Or was this the house of fairies,  
Left, because of the rough ways,  
Unassoiled by Ave Marys  
Which the passing pilgrim prays,  
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming on the blessed Sabbath  
days?

So, young muser, I sate listening  
To my fancy's wildest word.  
On a sudden, through the glistening  
Leaves around, a little stirred,  
Came a sound, a sense of music, which was rather felt than  
heard.

Softly, finely, it inwound me ;  
From the world it shut me in,—  
Like a fountain, falling round me,  
Which with silver waters thin  
Clips a little water Naiad sitting smilingly within.

Whence the music came, who knoweth ?  
*I* know nothing. But indeed  
Pan or Faunus never bloweth  
So much sweetness from a reed  
Which has sucked the milk of waters at the oldest riverhead.

Never lark the sun can waken  
With such sweetness ! when the lark,  
The high planets overtaking  
In the half-*evanished* Dark,  
Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the  
mark.

Never nightingale so singeth.  
Oh, she leans on thorny tree,  
And her poet-song she flingeth  
Over pain to victory !  
Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,  
Nor small finches sing as sweet,  
When the sun strikes through the bushes  
To their crimson clinging feet,  
And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens  
complete.

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd  
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,  
He of green and azure dreamèd,  
While it sate in spirit-ruth  
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent  
mouth.

If it *were* a bird !—ah, skeptic,  
Give me “yea” or give me “nay”—

Though my soul were nympholeptic,  
As I heard that virèlay,  
You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far away.

I rose up in exaltation  
And an inward trembling heat,  
And (it seemed) in geste of passion  
Dropped the music to my feet  
Like a garment rustling downwards!—such a silence followed it.

Heart and head beat through the quiet  
Full and heavily, though slower.  
In the song, I think, and by it,  
Mystic Presences of Power  
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to  
the Hour.

In a child-abstraction lifted,  
Straightway from the bower I past,  
Foot and soul being dimly drifted  
Through the greenwood, till, at last,  
In the hill-top's open sunshine I all consciously was cast.

Face to face with the true mountains  
I stood silently and still,  
Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,  
From the air about the hill,  
And from Nature's open mercies, and most debonair goodwill.

Oh, the golden-hearted daisies  
Witnessed there, before my youth,  
To the truth of things with praises  
Of the beauty of the truth,  
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

And I said within me, laughing,  
I have found a bower to-day,  
A green lusus—fashioned half in  
Chance, and half in Nature's play—  
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay.

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy  
Of this bower not built by one ;  
I will go there, sad or merry,  
With each morning's benison,  
And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have  
won.

So I said. But the next morning,  
(—Child, look up into my face—  
'Ware, oh skeptic, of your scorning !  
This is truth in its pure grace !)  
The next morning, all had vanished, or my wandering missed  
the place.

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,  
And upon it swear me true—  
By the wind-bells swinging slowly

Their mute curfews in the dew,  
By the advent of the snow-drop, by the rosemary and rue,—



I affirm by all or any,  
Let the cause be charm or chance,

That my wandering searches many  
Missed the bower of my romance—  
That I nevermore, upon it, turned my mortal countenance.

I affirm that, since I lost it,  
Never bower has seemed so fair ;  
Never Garden-creeper crossed it,  
With so deft and brave an air—  
Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them  
there.

Day by day, with new desire,  
Toward my wood I ran in faith,  
Under leaf and over brier,  
Through the thickets, out of breath—  
Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long  
as death.

But his sword of mettle clashed  
And his arm smote strong, I ween,  
And her dreaming spirit flashed  
Through her body's fair white screen,  
And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys  
green.

But for me, I saw no splendour—  
All my sword was my child-heart ;  
And the wood refused surrender



Of that bower it held apart,  
Safe as *Œdipus's* grave-place, 'mid *Colone's* olive swart.

As *Aladdin* sought the basements  
His fair palace rose upon,  
And the four-and-twenty casements  
Which gave answers to the sun ;  
So, in wilderment of gazing I looked up, and I looked down

Years have vanished since as wholly  
As the little bower did then ;  
And you call it tender folly  
That such thoughts should come again ?  
Ah, I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother  
men !

For this loss it did prefigure  
Other loss of better good,  
When my soul, in spirit-vigour  
And in ripened womanhood,  
Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a wood.

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure,  
Many a hope, and many a power—  
Studious health, and merry leisure,  
The first dew on the first flower !  
But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

I have lost the dream of Doing,  
And the other dream of Done,  
The first spring in the pursuing,  
The first pride in the Begun,—  
First recoil from incompleteness, in the face of what is won—

Exaltations in the far light  
Where some cottage only is ;  
Mild dejections in the starlight,  
Which the sadder-hearted miss ;  
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet for the very shame of  
bliss.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping  
Which the thunder could not break ;  
Something too of the strong leaping  
Of the staglike heart awake,  
Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought to  
take.

Some respect to social fictions  
Has been also lost by me ;  
And some generous genuflexions,  
Which my spirit offered free  
To the pleasant old conventions of our false humanity.

All my losses did I tell you,  
Ye, perchance, would look away ;—  
Ye would answer me, “ Farewell ! you

Make sad company to-day,  
And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words you  
say."

For God placed me like a dial  
In the open ground with power,  
And my heart had for its trial  
All the sun and all the shower !  
And I suffered many losses,—and my first was of the bower.

Laugh you ? If that loss of mine be  
Of no heavy-seeming weight—  
When the cone falls from the pine-tree.  
The young children laugh thereat ;  
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall be  
great.

One who knew me in my childhood  
In the glamour and the game  
Looking on me long and mild, would  
Never know me for the same.  
Come, unchanging recollections, were those changes over-  
came.

By this couch I weakly lie on,  
While I count my memories,—  
Through the fingers which, still sighing,  
I press closely on mine eyes.—  
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower arise.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,  
Stroked with light adown its rind ;  
And the ivy-leaves serenely  
Each in either intertwined ;  
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown  
nor pined.

From those overblown faint roses  
Not a leaf appeareth shed,  
And that little bud discloses  
Not a thorn's-breadth more of red  
For the winters and the summers which have passed me  
overhead.

And that music overfloweth,  
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves.  
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth ?  
Fay or Faunus—who believes ?  
But my heart still trembles in me, to the trembling of the  
leaves.

Is the bower lost, then ? who sayeth  
That the bower indeed is lost ?  
Hark ! my spirit in it prayeth  
Through the sunshine and the frost,—  
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and utter-  
most.

Till another open for me  
In God's Eden-land unknown,  
With an angel at the doorway  
White with gazing at His Throne,  
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—"All is lost  
... and *won*."

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## A TALE OF VILLAFRANCA.

TOLD IN TUSCANY.

My little son, my Florentine,  
Sit down beside my knee,  
And I will tell you why the sign  
Of joy which flushed our Italy  
Has faded since but yesternight ;  
And why your Florence of delight  
Is mourning as you see.

A great man (who was crowned one day)  
Imagined a great Deed :  
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,  
He touched it finely till the seed  
Possessed the flower : from heart and brain  
He fed it with large thoughts humane,  
To help a people's need.

He brought it out into the sun—  
They blessed it to his face :  
“ O great pure Deed, that hast undone  
So many bad and base !  
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,  
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,  
Deliver by God's grace.”

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north and south,  
Rose up in wrath and fear,  
And cried, protesting by one mouth,  
“ What monster have we here ?  
A great Deed at this hour of day ?  
A great just Deed—and not for pay ?  
Absurd,—or insincere.

“ And if sincere, the heavier blow  
In that case we shall bear,  
For where's our blessed ‘status quo,’  
Our holy treaties, where,—  
Or rights to sell a race, or buy,  
Protect and pillage, occupy,  
And civilize despair ?”

Some muttered that the great Deed meant  
A great pretext to sin ;  
And others, the pretext, so lent,  
Was heinous (to begin).

Volcanic terms of "great" and "just?"  
Admit such tongues of flame, the crust  
Of time and law falls in.

A great Deed in this world of ours?  
Unheard of the pretence is :  
It threatens plainly the great Powers :  
Is fatal in all senses.  
A just Deed in the world?—call out  
The rifles ! be not slack about  
The national defences.

And many murmured, " From this source  
What red blood must be poured !"  
And some rejoiced, " 'Tis even worse ;  
What red tape is ignored !"  
All cursed the Doer for an evil  
Called here, enlarging on the Devil,—  
There, monkeying the Lord !

Some said, it could not be explained,  
Some, could not be excused ;  
And others, " Leave it unrestrained,  
Gehenna's self is loosed."  
And all cried, " Crush it, maim it, gag it,  
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,  
Truncated and traduced !"

But HE stood sad before the sun,  
    (The peoples felt their fate).  
“The world is many,—I am one ;  
    My great Deed was too great.  
God’s fruit of justice ripens slow :  
Men’s souls are narrow ; let them grow.  
    My brothers, we must wait.”

The tale is ended, child of mine,  
    Turned graver at my knee.  
They say your eyes, my Florentine,  
    Are English : it may be :  
And yet I’ve marked as blue a pair  
Following the doves across the square  
    At Venice by the sea.

Ah, child ! ah, child ! I cannot say  
    A word more. You conceive  
The reason now, why just to-day  
    We see our Florence grieve.  
Ah, child ! look up into the sky !  
In this low world, where great Deeds die,  
    What matter if we live ?







A PORTRAIT.

“One name is Elizabeth.”—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her.  
 Ten times have the lilies blown,  
 Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear,  
Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty  
To the law of its own beauty

Oval cheeks encoloured faintly,  
Which a trail of golden hair  
Keeps from fading off to air :

And a forehead fair and saintly,  
Which two blue eyes undershine,  
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—  
Though too calm, you think, and tender,  
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,  
Frank, obedient,—waiting still  
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all your things.  
As young birds, or early wheat,  
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings  
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—  
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures, for the rest,  
Which come softly—just as she,  
When she nestles at your knee.



Quiet talk she liketh best,  
In a bower of gentle looks—  
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice it, murmurs lowly  
As a silver stream may run,  
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,  
As if drawn from thoughts more fair  
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,  
He would sing of her with falls  
Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,  
He would paint her unaware  
With a halo round the hair.

And if reader read the poem,  
He would whisper—"You have done a  
Consecrated little Una."

And a dreamer (did you show him  
That same picture) would exclaim,  
"'Tis my angel, with a name !"

And a stranger, when he sees her  
In the street even—smileth stilly,  
Just as you would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,  
Softens, sleeken every word,  
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover  
The hard earth whereon she passes;  
With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, "God love her!"—  
Ay, and always, in good sooth,  
We may all be sure HE DOTH.

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## VOID IN LAW.

SLEEP, little babe, on my knee,  
Sleep, for the midnight is chill,  
And the moon has died out in the tree,  
And the great human world goeth ill.  
Sleep, for the wicked agree :  
Sleep, let them do as they will.  
Sleep.

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my breast  
The last drop of milk that was good ;  
And now, in a dream, suck the rest,  
Lest the real should trouble thy blood.  
Suck, little lips dispossessed,  
As we kiss in the air whom we would.  
Sleep.

O lips of thy father ! the same,  
So like ! Very deeply they swore  
When he gave me his ring and his name,  
To take back, I imagined, no more !  
And now is all changed like a game,  
Though the old cards are used as of yore ?  
Sleep.

“Void in law,” said the Courts. Something wrong  
In the forms ? Yet, “Till death part us two,  
I, James, take thee, Jessie,” was strong,  
And ONE witness competent. True  
Such a marriage was worth an old song,  
Heard in Heaven though, as plain as the New.  
Sleep.

Sleep, little child, his and mine !  
Her throat has the antelope curve,  
And her cheek just the color and line  
Which fade not before him nor swerve :  
Yet *she* has no child !—the divine  
Seal of right upon loves that deserve.  
Sleep.

My child ! though the world take her part,  
Saying, “She was the woman to choose,  
He had eyes, was a man in his heart,”—

We twain the decision refuse :  
We . . weak as I am, as thou art, . .  
Cling on to him, never to loose.  
Sleep.

He thinks that, when done with this place,  
All's ended ? he'll new-stamp the ore ?  
Yes, Cæsar's—but not in our case.  
Let him learn we are waiting before  
The grave's mouth, the heaven's gate, God's face,  
With implacable love evermore.  
Sleep.

He's ours, though he kissed her but now ;  
He's ours, though she kissed in reply ;  
He's ours, though himself disavow,  
And God's universe favour the lie ;  
Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours below,  
Ours above, . . if we live, if we die.  
Sleep.

Ah baby, my baby, too rough  
Is my lullaby ? What have I said ?  
Sleep ! When I've wept long enough  
I shall learn to weep softly instead,  
And piece with some alien stuff  
My heart to lie smooth for thy head.  
Sleep.

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet ;  
Two loves led thee out to the sun :  
Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,  
If the one who remains (only one)  
Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat  
To thine enemy,—were it well done.  
Sleep.

May He of the manger stand near  
And love thee ! An infant He came  
To His own who rejected Him here,  
But the Magi brought gifts all the same.  
I hurry the cross on my Dear !  
*My* gifts are the griefs I declaim !  
Sleep.







## MY CHILD.

My child, we were two children,  
Small, merry by childhood's law ;  
We used to crawl to the hen-house,  
And hide ourselves in the straw.

We crowed like cocks, and whenever  
The passers near us drew—  
Cock-a-doodle ! they thought  
'Twas a real cock that crew.

The boxes about our courtyard  
We carpeted to our mind,  
And lived there both together—  
Kept house in a noble kind.

The neighbor's old cat often  
Came to pay us a visit ;  
We made her a bow and curtsey,  
Each with a compliment in it.

After her health we asked,  
Our care and regard to evince—  
(We have made the very same speeches  
To many an old cat since.)

We also sate and wisely  
Discoursed, as old folks do,  
Complaining how all went better  
In those good times we knew,—

How love and truth and believing  
Had left the world to itself,  
And how so dear was the coffee,  
And how so rare was the pelf,

The children's games are over,  
The rest is over with youth—  
The world, the good games, the good times,  
The belief, and the love, and the truth.









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